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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TRIPOLI 000110

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SUBJECT: MUBARAK AND QADHAFI CONFER ON AL SUMMIT PLANNING, VISAS FOR EGYPTIANS

REF: A) TRIPOLI 53; B) TRIPOLI 95

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CLASSIFIED BY: Gene A. Cretz, Ambassador, US Embassy Tripoli,
Department of State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) Summary: Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak flew to Libya on February 3 for a three-hour meeting with Muammar al-Qadhafi to discuss the upcoming Arab League Summit and growing differences over requirements for Egyptians entering Libya. Qadhafi reportedly also expressed interest in trying to mediate between Egypt and Qatar. Mubarak was expected to counsel Qadhafi that Libya needed to do more to assure Saudi Arabia that the summit would not lead to any new tensions between the two countries. The Egyptian Embassy expects that Iran will be invited to the summit at the ministerial level but noted that several Arab countries -- including Egypt -- would boycott the summit if Mahmoud Ahmadinejad attended. The Egyptian Embassy chalked up recent visits by Hamas Political Chief Khaled Meshaal to "independent" rather than official GOL initiatives to broker a Hamas-Fatah reconciliation in advance of the March 27 summit. Engagement with Qadhafi in the run-up to the Arab League Summit, strongly advocated by the Arab diplomatic community here, could help manage his notorious unpredictability. End Summary.

12. (C) Muammar al-Qadhafi held private talks with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Sirte on February 3 to discuss Libya's upcoming presidency of the Arab League (AL) and continuing differences over entry requirements for Egyptian nationals coming to Libya. Egyptian poloff said the three-hour visit would help the two countries coordinate in advance of the March 28 Arab League Summit scheduled to take place in Tripoli. Mubarak planned to counsel Qadhafi that Libya needed to better assure the Saudis that the Libyan-hosted summit would not serve as a platform to embarrass the royal family but instead move forward in a spirit of reconciliation between the two leaders.

IRAN EXPECTED TO PARTICIPATE AT THE FM LEVEL

13. (C) The Egyptian poloff expected that Arab-Iranian relations and Palestinian issues would dominate the summit, and he noted that Libya had made recent, high profile contact on both issues. The Egyptian ambassador also told the Ambassador that Sudan and upcoming non-proliferation events in the U.S., as well as Qadhafi's possible proposals to create new high-level political and military positions in the Arab League along the lines of

NATO and the EU, would also figure prominently. Arabs, he said, would not tolerate surprises like Libya's management of the July 2009 African Union Summit in Sirte, where Qadhafi's rumored, last-minute invitation of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had caused Mubarak to cancel his attendance at that summit at the eleventh hour. (Note: While Iranian diplomats were at the venue to advance Ahmadinejad's visit to the AU Summit, his visit was cancelled on the day he was supposed to arrive.) Should Ahmadinejad attend, he said, several heads of state -- including Egypt's -- would boycott the summit. He expected Iranian FM Manuchehr Motaki, who visited Tripoli on January 14, to represent Iran as an observer. The Iranian outreach by Libya is reportedly consistent with Qadhafi's new vision of being able to serve as a bridge between Tehran and the Arab world.

PALESTINIAN UNITY TO FIGURE LARGE ON AGENDA

14. (C) Recalling the yet-unfulfilled January 2009 pledge by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to provide \$1.5 billion in reconstruction assistance to Gaza, the Egyptian poloff assessed that Palestinian issues would provide plenty of opportunities to weaken fragile Arab unity and that Arab leaders would be "holding their breath" and hoping to avoid unwelcome surprises by the unpredictable Qadhafi. Although Libya has played host to Hamas' Khaled Meshaal twice in as many months, the Egyptian poloff did not expect any major initiatives by the Libyan government to force Hamas-Fatah resolution before the March 28 summit. In his view, "independent" initiatives like those of Khalid al-Humeidi -- son of long-time Qadhafi insider al-Khweldi al-Humeidi -- would intensify on the outside chance a Libyan could reach a breakthrough. Humeidi reportedly visited Ramallah and Gaza earlier this year to meet with Mahmoud Abbas and Meshaal and has organized humanitarian assistance to Gaza through his quasi-independent International Organization for Peace, Care, and Relief (septel).

15. (C) While MFA A/S-equivalent Omran Abu Kraa and Deputy Foreign Minister-equivalent Muhammed Siala have been named to lead Libya's preparations for the summit, the organizing

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committee has not communicated with member states on logistics or the agenda. A purpose-built site for the conference is rumored to be under construction on the sprawling grounds of the new Libyan Protocol office, though guest palaces nearer public view at that site appear to require more than seven weeks to complete. The Egyptian poloff commented that Arab leaders would be less forgiving than the African delegations in Sirte -- some of whom slept on the beach as they awaited proper room assignments from their Libyan hosts.

EGYPT SEEKS EASING OF LIBYA VISA REQUIREMENTS

16. (C) During his February 3 meeting with Qadhafi, Mubarak was expected to push for resolution of increasingly serious problems regarding Libyan entry requirements for Egyptian nationals. According to the Egyptian poloff, Egyptians are still subject to new requirements for visas or valid work contracts begun earlier this year (ref a) while Algerians and Tunisians have reverted to earlier rules allowing entry without a visa upon demonstrating financial self-sufficiency (in the form of \$800 cash). Recent bilateral agreements with countries providing significant labor to Libya, including Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, include 500 dinar (USD 420) commissions for Libyan sponsors of guest workers from those countries. In the Egyptian poloff's view, officials taking advantage of the financial inducements for sponsoring workers from those countries bore part of the blame for Egypt's continued troubles. Libya recently began a crackdown on illegal Egyptian workers. The Egyptian ambassador told the Ambassador that the Libyan crackdown resulted initially from European pressure on Libya to stem illegal traffic to Europe, and intensified after the extensive and embarrassing Egyptian press coverage given to Mutassim al-Qadhafi's New Year's partying in the Caribbean (ref b).

COMMENT

17. (C) In the wake of his failed attempt to extend his leadership of the African Union, Qadhafi undoubtedly is looking to the March 27 Arab League summit and beyond as a way to bolster his international standing. His massive ego and notoriously erratic behavior have generated much concern among the Arab diplomatic community here about the summit and its outcomes. The Arabs here have been very insistent that the U.S. has a role to play in influencing the outcome by engaging Qadhafi in the lead-up to the summit.

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